

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 1920

EXDIS

DEPT REPEAT TO HORN OF AFRICA COLLECTIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, PINT, SA, ET, SU
SUBJECT: SITUATION IN ERITREA

REF: STATE 101730

1. IN GENERAL DISCUSSION OF SITUATION IN ERITREA THIS MORNING, APRIL 27, WITH HASHIM OSMAN, FONOFF UNDER SECRETARY, I DREW ON APPRAISAL SET FORTH IN PARAS 2,3,4, AND THE FIRST TWO SENTENCES OF PARA 5 OF REFTEL. OSMAN EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST.

2. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT SUDANESE HAD NOTED A BUILD-UP OF ETHIOPIAN FORCES ALONG THEIR COMMON BORDER. ETHIOPIANS SEEMED TO HAVE A PLAN WHEREBY THEY WOULD PUSH NORTH ALONG THEIR BORDER TO SUDAN, DRIVING THE ERITREANS INTO THE HINTERLAND AND PREVENTING THEM FROM COMING INTO SUDAN AS REFUGEES.

3. OSMAN SAID THERE HAD BEEN A NUMBER OF VIOLATIONS OF SUDANESE AIRSPACE BY ETHIOPIAN MILITARY PLANES IN RECENT DAYS. SUDANESE HAD INSTRUCTED THEIR BORDER FORCES NOT TO SHOOT AT THESE AIRCRAFT. AT SAME TIME, SUDANGOV HAD
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PROTESTED TO ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR HERE AND TOLD HIM THAT IF THESE VIOLATIONS CONTINUED SUDANESE WOULD START SHOOTING. (ADDRESSEES PLEASE ASSURE THAT FOREGOING INFORMATION IS CLOSELY HELD AS SUDANESE MEDIA HAVE NOT YET PUBLISHED ANY REPORTS OF THESE VIOLATIONS). SUDANESE MILITARY STATIONED ALONG BORDER, SAID OSMAN, HAVE NOTED USE OF ROCKETS BY ETHIOPIAN FORCES ON THEIR SIDE OF THE LINE.

THUS FAR NONE OF THESE ROCKETS HAD LANDED IN SUDAN.

4. OSMAN SAID THAT WHILE HE WOULD NOT QUARREL WITH STATEMENT THAT THERE WERE AS YET NO CUBAN COMBAT UNITS IN ERITREA, SUDANESE BELIEVE THAT ETHIOPIANS WANT TO CLEAR AND FULLY CONTROL THE ROAD FROM MASSAWA TO ASMARA TO ADDIS ABABA. SUDANESE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT ETHIOPIANS COULD ATTAIN THIS OBJECTIVE ON THEIR OWN AND, THEREFORE, FEEL THAT SOVIETS AND CUBANS WOULD BECOME DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THIS OPERATION.

5. SUDANESE BELIEVE, SAID OSMAN, THAT MENGISTU WILL NOT RPT NOT NEGOTIATE WITH THE ERITREANS UNTIL HE HAS CLEARED THE ROAD AND SENT THE ERITREANS BACK TO THEIR GUERRILLA HIDEAWAYS. ONCE THIS IS ACCOMPLISHED, MENGISTU WILL SEEK SOVIET AND CUBAN ASSISTANCE IN BRINGING THE ERITREANS TO THE CONFERENCE TABLE. OSMAN SAID SUDANESE BELIEVE THAT MENGISTU, SOVIETS AND CUBANS HAVE AGREED TO THIS SCENARIO. IT IS FOR THIS REASON THE SOVIETS HAVE SUCCEEDED IN PERSUADING MENGISTU NOT TO ACCEPT MEDIATION OFFERS OF OTHERS, I.E., OAU AND SUDANESE. BERGUS

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT REPEATED ABOVE ADDRESSEES.

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